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DANSTEAD TRAVELLER



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Sailing the High Shaharras Sea to Drail

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BIG GAME HUNTING IN DRAIL

BY: WINSTON HUMBERT III
EDITOR, DANSTEAD TRAVELLER

Editor's Note: Having lost my wife twenty years ago to a corondon on Delsha, I jumped at the chance to escort Drenn Jayne Raynor to Corondon Isle along the coast of Drail to hunt the vile things. She wanted two breastplates to turn into Thailiarian armor. I wanted to hone my formidable skill before I head out to Delsha to find the two-fingered corondon that took my dear Elisabet. I claimed his thailier the day he took my young wife and I will not rest until I obliterate his presence from Jorune.

Drail is a largely unexplored peninsula shrouded in mystery and intrigue. It is connected to the continent by a tiny isthmus called Ponteer. The Thantierians are currently trying to colonize the area with mixed results. Small, local towns are often run as fiefdoms under the protection of a single family or group. Although this adds greatly to the local flavor, without a strong central government, getting around can be quite a challenge. The few existing roads are not kept up, as the locals prefer to travel by sea in small fishing craft called shifts. The inland is largely unexplored, and I strongly suggest hiring a guide. Drail is a mix of mountains and plains, deserts and lush valleys that can satisfy everyone's tastes. Our particular destination was off the western coast of Drail to Corondon Island, suitably named for its fiendish inhabitants.

Getting to Drail from Ardoth is no mean feat- thousands of miles lie between. The best routes all lead to the docks at Tan Iricid where you can gain passage across the Sharharras Sea to a town on the coast of Drail. Various small seaports abound, but the nearest fishing village to our destination was Lakūza, on a large island southwest of the Thailier Peninsula. Arranging passage to Tan Iricid is a relatively easy matter and the

most common solutions are listed below. Additional information on Tan Iricid is available in another article in this issue entitled: "The Mountain Crown: Thriddle in Their Element."

HOW TO GET THERE:

Leg one of the Journey:

From Ardoth to Tan Iricid:

By Sea:

The Giggit Express (the original Salu name of this ship is unpronounceable, thus the nick-name) sets sail from Ardoth to Tan Iricid once every fourteen weeks. It is a salu ship with one purpose: to import giggit taken from Meidrinth into Tan Iricid where it commands record prices. It is entirely safe, as any giggit that enter second stage spirric are summarily thrown overboard. The accommodations are less than desirable however; with a straw mattress and a limited menu with lots of raw fish (shudder), but if seafaring speed is your number one priority, this ship will take you aboard for 3 gems each. The captain is interested in one thing only- profits. If you insist on taking all your gear from home, be prepared to pay handsomely for space in the hold. Board the ship at least two hours before she's due to cut loose. If you're late, they won't wait, whether you've paid or not. Passage takes 7 weeks.

The Meidrinth Parcelage -a Heridothian company- operates a trading ship, *The Herrid*, from Ardoth to points south. Stops vary according to cargo on board. Passage is considerably cheaper and the human crew often takes on passengers. Passage times



vary from 10 weeks to 12 weeks, depending on the ship. Giggitt is not allowed. Large stocks of crystal must be checked through as baggage. (The Captain says this is due to a near fatal accident a few years ago, although a few passengers I've talked to have had cargo come up missing.) This is the most economical way to move large amounts of supplies to Drail. Passage is 30 yule a day (average just over 2 gems), food and semi-private cabins included. The food is nothing to write home about, but filling and hot. The cabins are simple and sparsely furnished, but clean. A thombo cart of supplies can be stowed in the hold for 5 links.

Or, alternatively you can travel overland by thombo cart or bochigon to Meidrinth to board the Jaspian crystal air schooner. The roads are in decent repair and well patrolled. Thombo travel is common and takes about three days, if you want to avoid hitting the worst of the ruts at full speed. If your sore nether regions aren't at issue, allow two and a half days. A bochigon takes just a day and a half.

From Meidrinth to Tan Iricid:

By Air:

Crystal Schooner. As always, the Jaspian ticket agents are more than helpful. They provide you with a schedule for the recently commissioned crystal schooner *The Tan Sor Star*. She takes a long round trip journey from Jasp with stops in North Khodre, Ros Crendor, Meidrinth, Anasan, Thantier and Tan Iricid. The agent I spoke with said they are trying to broker a deal for a dock in a fiefdom in Drail. Inquire before buying your ticket – if you're lucky the deal will have been sealed. Passage aboard the spacious and well-appointed schooner to Tan Iricid is 5 gems. The journey takes 17 days. (The crew takes a day off in Anasan and Thantier. Feel free to disembark for a day trip, however the non-human races are

not permitted to leave the ship in Thantier for their own safety.) The chef is one of my personal favorites, a Thantierian specialist. Try the Tarro Jumping sticks for a real spicy treat. *The Tan Sor Star* only departs from Ardoth once every 90 days- plan accordingly. Or, as always, you can charter a crystal ship. Inquire for prices at the ticket agency. If you're traveling on a budget, send an agent and equipment ahead via seafaring vessel. Be sure to ship them well in advance, as the journey by sea is considerably longer.

Note: If you're thinking that these ticket prices are a bit high, please consider that seafaring ships are traveling over 3400 miles to Tan Iricid from Ardoth, and Jaspian ships are traveling 1600 miles over land on a regular trade route. Given that amount of time on board, a passenger quickly becomes just another commodity. Keep a watchful eye on the crews and ships you choose, or you may wind up in the slave pits in Sillipus.

By Land:

It is possible to reach Drail by traveling overland. I *highly* discourage this, as the journey is overly long for the patience of a bochigon, and the reek from the thombo will have a disastrous effect on lesser constitutions after the first week. There are not many roads, and the ones you find may or may not lead to a friendly village. The locals are notoriously suspicious southwest of the Sobayid. Water and supplies can be problematic. If you have never crossed a significant portion of the Doben-Al, now is not the time to chance the Southern Wastes. The supplies needed are entirely different from Drail, and you will drag along gear that - in the end - you will wind up disposing of to lighten your load. Mixed races are emphatically not welcome in Thantier. Farther east, the Isthmus of Ponteer has no ports to speak of that can arrange for travel.



Leg Two of the Journey: *From Tan Iricid to Lakûza:*

Tan Iricid is the best place on Jorune to hire a Thriddle translator. Their prices are outrageous, but try and remember the last time you met a Thriddle that spoke 13 languages fluently. That should soften the blow. Beware the ones holding signs in Entren stating: "Will translate for giggit". Their translation services are somewhat lacking.

If you're in no hurry, hire a fishing vessel to take you to the major port towns in Drail. This is best accomplished in the fish section of the market below the Mountain Crown. If one can tolerate the stench long enough to politely inquire, you will find most vessels are more than willing to earn a little coin for their return trip home. Passage costs about 20 yule a day for passengers and, if a larger ship is available, 10 yule per thombo, thombo cart or per half dozen porters. Bochigon and lothern are too large to be carried by shift and will have to be sold or given away in Tan Iricid. At these prices, don't expect speed or a meal. From this point forward, you're eating off your rations. Buy some fresh coditch and smoked fish in Tan Iricid for the journey.

The journey from Tan Iricid to Lakûza by fishing shift is long and slow. Numerous coastal fishing villages must be traversed, and switching boats will be all too common. Some say that the journey is far more important than the destination. This journey will prove them right.

We were able to hire a returning Salu schooner to take us to Lakuza, about 600 miles to the west. The cost was negligible (about 6 gemlinks each). The ship was unable to dock in the shallow cove, and we wound up being rowed to shore in small dinghies. I sent a man ahead in the first boat with the supplies, and we followed behind when our gear had all been stowed ashore.

A Few Notes on Packing for Drail in General:

Supplies are patchy at best, and assuming you can purchase anything on the far end is a mistake. Some mainland towns have wonderful markets, but frequent armed skirmishes between the Thantierian colonists run roughshod through the towns, often fighting straight through the market square. The Thantierians aren't a friendly lot to non-human races, including the Iscin races. Do not expect to buy any supplies from those settlements if you are not pure-strain human. Racism is still a sad fact of life in some parts of Jorune.

On a good note, villages of Trarch can be found, and if your trarch language is up to snuff (or you bring along a translator) they can be quite friendly no matter what your race. Supplies are limited to a fermented (read rancid) durlig mash and some dried meats. Trarch are not big believers in clothing and the heat seems to exacerbate this behavior. The easily embarrassed should wait out of town. Trarch women make excellent quality rope and snares for small game. The locals make wonderful guides, if you can persuade them into the bargain. They do not generally take standard link currency, and bartering is a fine art inside these villages. Large beads, pottery, a few limilates and exotic hides all seem to be in demand. As a rule, most Trarch here do not speak Entren, and have not had good relations with the Thantierian colonists. A wise human explorer would be sure to clearly announce that he is not Thantierian upon meeting any Trarch. Ardoth has no official relations with any of these outlying villages.

Underwater settlements of Salu can be found along narrow shoals with above water docks, although their supplies are usually useless to the wilds explorer, their delicacies from the sea are rare elsewhere, and often



quite tasty. If you are a sport fisherman, Salu nets, lures and line are the best anywhere and sport fishing aboard a salu boat is a stimulating pastime. Salu will take link currency for smaller purchases, although for larger sums, milled hardwood seems to be the way to go. The Salu sailors can spin quite a tale and a wise traveller would heed the stories of larger creatures that inhabit the open waters off western Drail. The Salu make agile little shifts that almost refuse to capsizes in the harsh storms that often roll up on these waters with little or no warning.

On the Fishing Village of Lakûza:

Lakûza is a small Trarch village of less than 100 situated on the coast of the large island to the west of Drail. Having hired a Thriddle translator, we encountered few problems, although there is not much of note to be purchased there from their craftsmen. Weapons were rather too large and unwieldy for humans and tended to be blunt and bashing. They do have some good oversize fishing equipment available, and the fishing boats will take you anywhere within a day's sail. The fishermen know these coastal waters well. Although I encountered little of any notice in the village, I list here available services and people of note for the benefit of Danstead travelers:

Where to stay:

While in Lakûza, there are no encleps available, which severely limits your options. If you bring a large enough quantity of limilates, the Trarch medicine man, Graar, may take you in. His mud and skin hut is typical of the village and provides nothing more than space on the dirt floor to lay your bedroll. You'll most likely be situated close to the fire between the suspended and clinking bones of 'magical' creatures. The inside is spacious, although a certain Trarch "mustiness" does seem to pervade everything. We chose to camp just

outside the village, with Graar's permission. Getting away from the Trarch did wonders for my delicate sinuses.

Where to shop:

As noted above, currency is generally not accepted. Bartering is the rule of the day, so be sure to bring along ample trinkets for the natives. Supplies are extremely limited, so be sure to plan ahead! Please take note there are no places to refill energy cells, resupply on recos, or have surgery done. Once in Lakûza you are in the wilds. You have only what you brought with you, or can convince the natives to part with.

Graar, the Medicine Man: A few limilates will be available from the medicine man in the large central hut. Graar is a shrewd bargainer and he knows the scarcity of Arrgish in these parts. Be prepared to pay handsomely in beads, hides or even your hat, should he strike a fancy to it. A very limited supply of hilc is available, and is usually kept as a bartering tool. If you're a shrewd bargainer, he may even throw in a bud or two.

Hresck, the Food Preserver: Hresck has a hut down near the cove, and regularly smokes fish and meats to preserve them for the tribe. Hresck is a widowed female Trarch, having lost her mate 2 years ago to a Drail Jungle Cat raid. She has an 8 year old son about my size. If you have managed to bring a thombo all this way, she will eye it greedily. I suppose even the Trarch get tired of fish and crustaceans.

Na-Me-Uk, the Chief: Situated in a large hut to the right of the Medicine Man, Na-Me-Uk leads his people with an iron fist and a slow wit. Be sure to get into good graces with Graar, or you'll never gain an audience. Na-Me-Uk has symbolically married every female in the tribe and never sleeps in the same hut two nights in a row. (It must be good to be the Chief!) The Chief can help choose a suitable guide, although he will



require a service to prove your mettle and gain his favor. The bigger the favor, the better the guide. Bargain does not work with the Chief. You must gain his esteem.

Chaw-Nek-Chek, fisherman: This hut is one of the closest to the water and we were able to hire his shift for the equivalent of 50 gemules in trinkets a day. He can muster up another boat to help with supplies for an additional 30 gemules of trinkets. Chaw-Nek-Chek is a long time fisherman in these waters and knows the way to Corondon Island. In Trarch Corondon translates to “the big angry ones”. He will not come onto the island with you, although a return pick up can be arranged.

Klaarg, hunter: Should you choose to explore the Island where Lakuza is situated, you should see the Chief about getting a guide. No guides will accompany you to the Island of ‘the Big Angry Ones’. Their hunters do know their own backwoods well, and if the language barrier can be overcome, can provide valuable insight into the strange local fauna and flora, some of which is quite dangerous. The yearly hunt to cull the numbers of the Drail Jungle Cats generally happens in the fall, and you would gain esteem and honor in trying to help the tribe overcome this menace. Klaarg has some good information about the Drail Jungle Cats whether the Chief gives you a guide or not. If by chance, you have the opportunity to hunt the cats with the hunters, you will take part in a strange ceremony reminiscent of ‘last rites’.

Local Fauna of Note:

Drail Jungle Cats, the local menace: The locals tell stories of a fabled creature called ‘smiling death’. Apparently they are not smiling because they are happy, but rather because their lips cannot encase all of their 9 centimeter teeth. I was told they could get as large as a small hut and move silently through the wilds. These creatures never

hunt alone, preferring to travel in small packs of 4-6. Apparently they make rounds on the large island, and one or twice a year will raid the Trarch village. Through the years, the locals have learned to retreat into caves nearby until the ‘smiling death’ moves on. The first warning of such a raid is usually the short bloodcurdling scream of their first victim. Best avoided by the novice hunter, they make excellent sport for the expert. They’ll definitely give you a thrashing if you’re caught off guard. Let your bearers lead the way on this hunt. Prized by the Trarch, the hides are of an unusually long and luxurious rusty orange fur that has an appealing green sheen when hit by the light. I had my taxidermist preserve the hide and I expect to make a wonderfully fashionable coat for the colder months ahead. I shall be the envy of Ardoth!

The Isle of the Big Angry Ones (otherwise known as Corondon Isle)

Upon arriving from the dinghies on the sandy shores of Corondon Isle, our feet crunched loudly on the empty crystal sand. Be sure to bring good ankle or calf high footwear, as this stuff is everywhere and gets in all the *ahem* crevices.

I won’t spoil all of the fun of the Island, but I will give my fellow hunters a few tips:

Leave the pretty red crystal covered shellfish alone. A lightening blast dysha is *still* a lightening blast dysha – even if it does come from something 6 centimeters across.

The larger corondon stay near the center of the island. If you want to play it safe, or there are ladies along, set up camp on the beaches. If you came here to tackle bigger things than a bottle or four of Sychillian wine by the sunset, feel free to camp inland - just be sure to post constant watch. They don’t call this Corondon Isle for nothing.

There is a gorgeous waterfall about 5 km inland with plenty of fresh water. If there are



no other creatures around, it makes a most refreshing – if chilly- shower. The fish from the pool below are exceptional, but be sure to watch out for pesky gourmand especially around the water. A few juvenile corondon occasionally drink here but if you're after a real prize, the bigger ones like the inland lake. Follow the river from the falls about 2 km downstream. You won't regret it. I have spent twenty years hunting corondon, and I have never seen larger or more impressive specimens.

Bring plenty of arrgish and hilc. If you run out of food here, there is nothing suitable to the palate, or the constitution. Unless you want a bout of Wildman's Revenge, take your hilc. Arrgish is nowhere to be found here growing wild and there is a very small supply for trade in Lakûza. You've been warned.

Be wary. There are more corondon on this island than you might think. Once the tarro announce your arrival, the game is afoot. One false move and you could very well become the latest victim in a long string of thrill seekers.

The real sport isn't taking down a corondon – that's easy. The trick is to finish skinning and de-thailiering him before his friends turn up. Bring along an expert. Pay the man well!

Needless to say, we came back successful: a large, prizewinning male and a mating age female. We lost three bearers, a cook, two guards, a guide and two thombos. But it was worth it. Ah! The thrill of the hunt!

*Until next time, I'm Winston Humbert III,
hoping to find you in my Danstead travels.*



Stormy Seas off the Coast of Lakuza



THE MAUDRA'S MEAL
A MAUDRA FOLKTALE AS RETOLD
BY: DHAR-SHOLARI JOE COLEMAN

The colors of the storm drove Alvet into the cave as he dragged the third pair of heavy buckets for water from the stream near the base of the trail. Far away, deep into the night, he knew the three of the seven moons spread their light upon the swollen clouds, and the clouds spilled their razor sleet upon the forest with thoughtless cruelty. But swirling within the sheets of stinging rain and the bolts of lightning, pools of green, yellow and red, billowed – floating between the trees and spinning into airborne whirlpools of merging colors.

Within the lip of the cave he set his buckets down and rocked back on his heels to watch the storm. There was something about the color, Alvet thought, something he should know. It moved in patterns separate from the physical storm, pooling in clusters of florescence above the ground, swirling in eddies around the sturdy dark trunks of the older trees. Needle tendrils of light wove their way into the greater flows, tracing lines rising from the rain matted grasses and great amber leaves of the forest, sparking and crackling into the sky. The trceries wove an intricate pattern as natural as the burl of a grandfather shen tree root.

Alvet found himself breathing in shallow gasps and stepped backwards again, unable to take his eyes from the billows of light. A movement from beyond the mouth of the cave startled him and Alvet squinted to make out the form of the matron Prasis' oldest children. The girl strained against the weight of her water burden, but as soon as she was within the shelter of the cave, she

pulled back her hood, shook her red hair and stared intently at the storm.

"Does it frighten you?" Alvet asked. She looked at him for a moment, nodded slowly and returned her gaze to the fury outside. "Are the colors more frightening than the rain?" he asked cautiously.

The girl did not answer for a moment, and then slowly said, "The rain is always scary. The colors are special."

A distant voice barked from the depths of the cave and the girl whirled. "Yes, mama," she called. She grabbed her buckets, steadied herself and ran a few steps into the cave. She called back to Alvet as she ran, "The meal." She did not wait to see if Alvet would follow, but hurried on and vanished into the snaking entry channel to the heart of the cave.

Reluctantly, Alvet pulled his cloak tighter around his shoulders, allowed himself a final look at the display in the airs of the storm and carried his water buckets into the warm smells of the inner cave.

Zhamin, his mother, had seen the cave before the storm descended in earnest. Her discovery allowed the clans to take refuge for the night. The modest opening led to a honeycomb of chambers that were rich with crystals of deep greens, reds and blues. The oldest Maud suggested that – at some point in the future – the mountain above them would levitate above the rich crystal bed to become a skyrealm. It would join the hundreds of others that floated above the countrysides of Jorune.

Alvet's mother said she did not see the colors Alvet saw, so he had learned not to ask any of the older Mauds about the



flowing hues. But among the children he continued to find allies who were willing to admit, however timidly, that they also saw the streams and threads of liquid color moving through the sky at night and in the shadows during the day. Now, in the mouth of the crystal cave the colors seemed brighter than ever.

He turned the final twist in the passage to find the families gathering by the cooking pots tended by Zhamin and a few of the other Maudra women. Mingled with the aroma of stewing meat, durlig and spices were the smells and sounds of the sick. The fever had come upon them almost as quickly as the storm. The Maudra would periodically swoon with this fever. Some died. It was common enough that if one spoke of the Maudra fever at all, it was in terms of keeping the victims comfortable – or betting on the lifespan of the more seriously ill. Paying fever money to the winners was never joyful, for loser or winner, but had become a way of dealing with the sudden appearances of the fevers.

The greatest gallery of the cavern was surrounded with terraces and niches where individual families had pulled their handcarts and wheelbarrows. Most of the little conveyances had been tipped up to allow more of the precious floor of the cave for the milling families, each tending its own sick. When they had first entered the caverns, a steady flow of young men and women brought buckets of water from the gorged stream a few hundred yards from the entrance to the cavern. Each water porter usually brought one bucket for the cooks and one for his or her own family. A second or third trip was then spent fetching water for the families where the fever had taken hold of a porter-age Maudra.

Since his mother was a cook, Alvet brought one bucket to his own family, two buckets to the sick nearby and three buckets for the five women who prepared the

common meal. A series of cooking fires roared in the center of the gallery and a line was forming as each Maudra brought his or her food bowl to the pot for a share of the stew.

The exile order had come while most of the Maudra men were working contracts for farming guilds or at sea. The higher music of the women's voices struck Alvet and he wanted to hear the lower register of his father's sound. There were only a few boys his age for companionship and a great many younger children. As always, the older children were expected to help herd the younger children during the migration and there was little time for anything other than walking and resting.

"Something hot would be good," Zhamin smiled as she ladled a meat-rich serving from her cooking pot into her son's bowl. Alvet smiled and moved aside to let the next member of the clan have her bowl filled. She was an old woman with long, white hair and one white-lensed eye. She was helped by the red haired girl Alvet had seen at the mouth of the cave.

Alvet sat with his back against the cold crystal wall, watching his mother work and a few of the younger children sneak a piece of meat from their bowls. At last the cooking pots were almost empty and the women who had prepared the meal filled their own bowls and joined their families. Zhamin motioned with a tip of her head and Alvet's three sisters fell into step behind her as she walked to the spot where Alvet patiently held his bowl.

The half-blind woman who had followed Alvet in line stood on a small ledge on a higher level of the cave and the murmurings of the Maudra fell away to an expectant silence. "We have wandered through time," she said, her voice crackling but still strong. The gathered Maudra mumbled, "As it has always been" in unison.



The old woman called out again. "We shall wander again, but we are never alone." Her voice slapped against the sheets of crystal in the most distant recess of the cave, "We share this meal, we share our lives, we share our blood." With thin, clean fingers the old woman lifted a small bit of cooked root from her bowl and held it forward to the red-haired girl who assisted her. "I give you part of me to carry with you," she recited, "and you take a part of me with you."

The girl closed her eyes and accepted the food the old woman offered, then took a small piece of spiced durlig root from her own bowl and offered it to the old woman. "I give you part of me to carry with you," she repeated, "and you take part of me away with you."

Around the cave hundreds of hands reached into their bowls and the ritual was repeated. With luck, each Maudra would be able to give a bit of the stew to every other Maudra in the cave, and by doing so would be filled by their offerings in return. Some of the youngest children cried when they first understood that they were to give away the wonderful meal they held within their bowls, but as they tasted the morsels they were given, they began to play the new game with glee, running to try to reach every other Maudra in the cave.

When the food was gone the Maudra rose, spread their arms with their hands spread wide, turned their faces upward and closed their eyes. "What life gives," they whispered, "gives life. These are my people."

The room fell silent for a long moment, and slowly grew back to the soft murmur of conversation as family groups began to regroup for the night. Zhamin sat with her back to the wall and opened her arms, her cloak hanging like the welcoming wings of a mother talmaron sheltering her brood. Her youngest daughter, Pari, immediately claimed her spot in her mother's lap, curling

sideways against her mother's stomach and breasts. The older girls, Tri and Wana, took their spots to either side and Zhamin swung the cloak closed. She looked at her son. "The price of growing older," she smiled with a mock sigh, "no place in mama's cloak."

Alvet smiled and pulled his own cloak around him. It had been many years since he had slept against his mother like a child, but he felt as close and warmed by her as he had been beneath her cloak.

The fires died down and a few of the older boys kept the embers turned and fed bits of wood to keep the cave warm, and the sounds of heavy breathing and snoring grew in the echoes of the cavern. Alvet could not sleep but listened.

"It is your first exile," Zhamin whispered after the three girls were asleep. "In time this will mean no more to you than a change of clothes."

Alvet forced himself to smile. "As you say," he allowed, "in time."

She smiled and put her hand on his. "Your father will be proud to see how you've grown." Alvet flushed and turned away. While not fully initiated into the secrets of adulthood, he understood the Dharsage's order as a response to the growing concern over border raids and crop failures. Maudra were always convenient targets for public blame laying for a hundred foul events no one could control. The Maudra had learned to keep their roots shallow for over two thousand years. Alvet's father had gone to work in the farm-rich farmlands of the Gauss Valley the season before the exile. No one had expected the Dharsage's decree, but Alvet still felt a vague anger at the man who had left himself, his mother and his sisters to face banishment alone.

Zhamin's breathing slowed and Alvet looked toward his mother in the feeble light of the fire maintained at the center of the



largest part of the cave. He remembered her face from years before, in other firelights. "She is being aged by this," he thought.

He waited for a few minutes, until he was sure his family was sleeping, then rose silently and crept back to the mouth of the cave. The rain had softened to large, round drops, but the colors he saw had increased in brightness and ferocity. As he watched, he became aware of a sound from the passageway behind him. He turned and saw the red-haired youth creeping toward him. Alvet looked outward again.

"You began the meal," Alvet acknowledged.

The girl nodded. "Haris is my grandmother," she whispered. "I help her."

The two looked at the storm. "I am Alvet," the boy offered awkwardly.

"I know," she responded. "I am Ulans."

"What do you see out there?" Alvet asked.

"Rain," Ulans answered cautiously.

Alvet faced her. "Is that all?"

Ulans smiled broadly. "I see them, too," she admitted, "but Haris says there is nothing to see." Three more of the older children – two boys and a girl – crept through the gloom in the heart of the cavern to the opening of the cave.

"I wonder," Alvet mused, "if this is part of the secret teachings they will give us as we become adults, or if they truly do not see."

They watched silently for a while before Ulans said, "I believe Haris sees nothing but rain from her good eye. She has never lied to me."

One of the boys considered and nodded. "My mother has never lied, even when the truth has been painful." He fell silent again as a great surge of white light swelled among the colored threads over the dancers and seemed to draw them in. The great blob of white twisted and hunched like a living thing before drawing itself thin and coursing

away like a great worm, changing its thickness and transparency as it moved.

Alvet looked at one of the boys who had joined him. His face was heavy with sweat and he steadied himself on the side of the cave, his hand touching an open outcropping of yellow crystal.

Somewhere a patch opened between distant storm clouds allowing the gray light of the moon Tra to shine down into the forest. In the white light Alvet saw the boy's face clearly – far too clearly for the feeble light reaching them from the storm outside. There was a light that seemed to shine from the sweating boy.

There was a gasp from Ulans and the others and Alvet spun to look outside. He froze. In the trees, centered in the pool of Tra's light, stood a form. The body was turned so they did not think that it was observing them in the shadows of the cave, but it was clearly not a man, not a fully human man. It was colored like a man wearing dothobider hide clothing and a great, light cloak. Against the chill winds it moved rhythmically and hypnotically. Its hand rose bearing the great dark gray blade of a sword shaped rod that was apparently not metal.

"Shantha?" Ulans whispered, and Alvet shrugged.

"I saw one in Ardoth," he responded. "They are taller. I think it is a Maudra."

"Dancing in the storm?" Ulan asked, expecting no answer.

The figure moved slowly and gracefully, drawing the great sword through the storm-lights of the sky. Near the grip, a spur of the blade curled outward and on either side were dark carvings that reminded Alvet of the Shanthic runes he had seen on ruins near Essanja where he had visited an uncle, years ago. The figure held the sword over its head, supporting the weight of the blade with a firm grip on the handle and a gentle support from his free hand. He spun slowly



to one side, then to the other, his cape swirling lightly in the cool air as the tip of the sword traced visible echoes of light as he silently danced. Where the tip of the sword passed, a thin line of color appeared in the air, like the colors of the storm they had watched earlier.

The being moved in mute, graceful choreography, tracing great figures of light in the night sky with the tip of the enormous blade. He moved with increasing speed, spinning faster by pulling the sword high over his head and holding to the grip with both hands. A second figure joined the first, then a third. The three danced with increasing fury and the lights in the sky seemed to increase with their movements. Blades flashed, light in the air seemed to weave together into pulsing knots of visible energy, following the frantic thrashing of huge, butterfly strokes.

Lighting flashed and the storm returned in full fury. The dancers stopped. They were clearly interrupted from their intended passion of movement and the three began running toward the cavern. A spark shot through the group - not from the approaching dancers, but from behind them. Four of the children in the mouth of the cave shouted and dove in different directions to avoid the flash of light. The sweating boy lay on the ground, convulsing and gurgling with words he was incapable of speaking.

Alvet looked back to the running men. They were clearly Maudra, with the sharp, clean features of the best of the race. To Alvet's surprise they were sheathing their great dark swords. One was yelling at them, but a crash of thunder drowned out his voice.

The boy on the ground screamed and jerked upward. To Alvet's horror a golden light erupted from the boy's mouth and eyes. There was a stench of burning meat and Alvet felt a man's hand shove him roughly to one side.

"Concentrate," the man's voice demanded. "I need you to help me if I am to pull this out of you..." The stranger gripped the boy by the shoulders. Alvet thought he saw a slight haze of green where the man's hand touched the boy's shirt.

But the fallen boy was no longer spewing light from the orifices of his face. The sweating boy looked at the stranger who held him. A look of horror had replaced the glow of burning light. "Think it out," the man commanded, "Will it gone!"

The boy could only look confused. The other two dancers pushed past the children and ran into the cavern. Alvet could hear the uproar as his booming voice rudely woke the sleeping Maudra and barked orders that echoed down the opening passage.

"Forgive me, boy," the man said softly to the terrified child he held. He released his grip on the boy and Alvet saw his hand ball into a fist, dangerously near the face of the sweating boy.

Alvet lunged without thinking. He would not let the man hit his companion if he could possibly prevent it. He wrapped his arms around the man's forearm and began to kick the man's ribs furiously.

The fist did not move into the face of the fallen, sweating boy as Alvet had expected, but the fingers flexed and rotated and moved as through grabbing threads on a loom. Even with the full weight of Alvet on his arm, he succeeded in pulling his hand purposefully backward, drawing a pool of red light from the body of the boy who had fallen.

The man fell backward, Alvet still wrapped around the older man's arm, his small feet still beating into the dothobider hide shirt.

"You wouldn't let a stranger hurt your friend," the man rasped through the pain of his kicked ribs, "but I don't have time..." The man's free hand came up quickly. Alvet expected to feel the impact, but the



man halted his hand with a slight tossing motion of his fingers.

A flash of red caught Alvet in the face and a horrible, burning shock coursed through his whole body. He felt himself fly backwards and slam into the wall of the cave opening. Ulans was at his side in an instant, the small clay pot she used for cooking and cleaning was in her hand and she placed herself squarely between the intruder and her fallen friend.

The boy who had fallen was sitting on the ground, shaking his head.

The intruder awkwardly pulled himself to his feet, clutching his ribs where Alvet had kicked him, and stumbled away to join his friend inside the cavern. He took a few steps when a voice called back to him from the growing din of angry sleepers rising within the galleries and niches of the cavern.

The man grumbled something about his companions' probable parentage and loped back to the mouth of the cave, carefully avoiding Ulans and Alvet.

Outside, he stood up, yelped in pain as he flexed from the protective crouch, and threw both hands upwards. "Damn you, Gends," he roared as orange and brown light pulsed from his body. It was like the light Alvet had watched in the sky, but it seemed to come from deep within the man's body, boiling out and flowing upward, almost as if under the man's conscious control.

The dark amber light spread wide and curved over the opening fully twenty yards across. The rain entered the light and stopped, running down along the translucent, glowing structure as surely as it would have run along the best ceramic gutters on the roofs of the houses in Ardoth.

Families began emerging from the cavern, their sick helped by the healthy. In the midst of the moving crowd small spheres of translucent brown light bounced into slow-moving people's heads, like soap bubbles grown solid. The man who had

created the umbrella of light collapsed to the muddy ground and screamed.

Alvet saw his mother rush to the man's side. The dancer's companions emerged in the gloom under the rainproof light. "The cavern will make you sick," the one who seemed to be in charge called out. If you already have the fever, the cavern can kill you." He looked up and his mouth fell open. "Lavid?" he called, "Did you do this by yourself?"

The fallen dancer said something that made the older children giggle, the mothers blush and his friend to smile. To Alvet it sounded like something you could never get a beagre to do, but he could feel a great deal of affection in the insult.

"Wonderful," the man in charge smiled. "My friend has made a Wall to keep you all dry until morning. After the storm you can fetch your things."

The third man peered at the crowd of disgruntled women, adolescents and children. "They are ready, Gends," he whispered. "They need to learn. Several of them must kern immediately or they will burn."

The man in charge nodded.

"I am sorry for the rude awakening, my friends, but I feared that some of you would never have awakened at all. "I bear you greetings from the Shanthas of Tra, and the spirit of Mayatrish has decided that you shall be the first outside Tashka to hear the truth of the Maudra fever, and perhaps may be the first to hear the hope of the Maud."

"But first allow my friends and I to treat your sick." Gends walked to the fallen dancer and squatted down beside him.

"I am sorry," the man said, "but I am drained. I used it all to make the Wall, and my weave is loose - the Wall will only stand for a week or two."

Gends smiled and patted Lavid on his shoulder. Lavid winced. "You have done a wonderful thing, my friend. They will listen



if they are dry. Ichod and I can kern the sick. Perhaps we can find some green crystals for you after the storm has passed.” Gends stood.

“Who is the sickest among you?” Gends asked, wading into the crowd of Maudra.



THE MOUNTAIN CROWN: THRIDDLE IN THEIR ELEMENT

BY: DHARWIN TANKETTA, ISCIN CORRESPONDENT, *DT*

Hello, Dharwin Tanketta here! I’m a klade-trained field Iscin. I wanted to take this opportunity to share some observations with our readers on the Thriddle and their homeland of Tan-Iricid. During my first visit to Tan-Iricid, I had the opportunity to live among the Thriddle for a year while I engaged in research on behalf of my klade. The chance to live and work with Thriddle in often times close quarters is one that I will never forget.

TRAVEL TO TAN-IRICID

Tan-Iricid, the island home realm of the Thriddle is a long way from the Iscin klades of Burdoth. Travel to Tan-Iricid is an ordeal in and of itself. Let’s start by talking a bit about how to get there. Overland travel from Burdoth to Tan-Iricid will get you as far as the western coast of Ponteer. I cannot discourage the reader strongly enough to simply avoid the overland route from Burdoth to Ponteer. The trip is more than 1600 miles overland and confronts the traveler with several real problems that have to be dealt with. The overland route takes you from the southwest Sobayid into the southeastern reaches of the Doben-Al Desert. Aside from the heat and occasional Crugar hunting parties, the availability of

food and water is questionable. This leg of the journey is nearing completion when the peaks of the Than Mountains can be seen off in the southwest.

The Than Mountains, known to the local inhabitants as “The Teeth of Than” are generally recognized as the northeast edge of Thantier. After traveling through the Than mountain pass, you will encounter a sizeable, all too formidable Thantierian fortress built into the western cliff face overlooking the Trinnu Road. This is the Thantierian border... more or less. The Thantierians are not especially friendly to Burdothians. You can expect a lengthy delay for questioning by the Thantierians. Non-humans, referred to as ‘Thone’ are simply turned around at the border fort and sent back the way they came, though I’ve heard stories of disappearances and much worse! A set of Iscin robes and an Iscin Klade patch have opened many doors for me during my travels. This was not one of those doors. Assuming you can get past the Thantierian border patrols at the frontier, you can expect occasional “friendly visits” from the Thantierians for the duration of your stay in their realm. You can count on very little help from any locals you may meet. One of the smartest things you can do while traveling through Thantier is to purchase



local clothing if you are able and keep your conversations with anyone as brief as possible. The Entren spoken in Thantier carries a unique accent that will stand you apart as an outsider.

If you are somehow fortunate enough to have a thombo or more fortunate to be able to persuade someone to sell you a thombo, the trip through Thantier can be completed in about two weeks. There is an additional word of caution that I would leave with the reader. About 9 days into Thantier, you will come upon the city of Suttura. Avoid this city unless you have a medical emergency that requires immediate attention. The people here go out of their way to make foreigners feel unwelcome. A run in with the law, the military or worse is almost a certainty. Suttura is a large walled city of more than 50,000 people and has one of the largest markets in all of Thantier. High-grade weapons and armor can be purchased here, albeit the locals will not hesitate to charge foreigners an exorbitant amount for their purchases. Whatever business you may have in Suttura, it is best to do it quickly and be back on your way. The Trinnu Road continues southwest from Suttura and ends abruptly at the fishing town of Obothin. The Velka River meets the sea here as well. The Thantierian fisherman and marsh runners make a living here harvesting the Sea of Ceridis as well as relying on the bounty of the Velkin Marsh. Go immediately to the docks. There are a few enterprising individuals here that will be more than happy to carry you across the Sea of Ceridis to Tan-Iricid. Rates vary and are generally quite steep, the trip will cost you somewhere in the neighborhood of 15 to 20 gemlinks.

A considerably easier means of getting from Burdoth to Tan-Iricid is by ship. When I say ship, I am talking about both ocean faring vessels and Jaspian crystal ships. I would ask the reader to please see the article "Big Game Hunting in Drail" for details on

ocean and airborne travel. Ocean voyages begin right in Ardoth and continue on to the following ports of call: Rhodu, Anasan onwards to the docks at Sherpikva, Ponteer. A week-long trip overland through Ponteer ends at the Ponteer port city of Cerim. Passage across the Sea of Ceridis is considerably more reasonable, with rates varying around 10 to 15 gemlinks.

Passage aboard a Jaspian crystal ship can be arranged in Meidrinth for a considerable fee. **BE SURE TO BOOK YOUR PASSAGE IN ADVANCE AND CONFIRM THE RESERVATION THE DAY PRIOR TO DEPARTURE.** The cost of passage from Miedrinth to Tan-Sor, Tan-Iricid is 6 gems. The price is steep, but the entire voyage can be completed in about 17 days.

Travel By Warp. This is not a likely proposition. The Thriddle are master mathematicians and are gaining a growing expertise of warp mapping. The Thriddle take extraordinary pains to destroy, guard or otherwise obfuscate sites that allow warp travel to Tan-Iricid. Warp travel to nearby Ponteer may be a possibility.

THE CITY OF TAN-SOR

Your first stop on Tan-Iricid will most likely be the City of Tan-Sor. Whether you are entering the city from the docks or touching down at the Tan-Sor Skyport, the first thing that impresses you about the place is the architecture. Thriddle buildings are rarely more than a single story. The reason for this is simple. Thriddle legs are double articulated. Thriddle don't do well climbing stairs or ladders. The consequence of building a city comprised entirely of single story buildings is urban sprawl. Tan-Sor is a sprawling city of more than 80,000 souls. Thriddle account for more than 97 percent of the population. As a general rule, citizens from nearly every realm on Jorune can be found in Tan-Sor. The obvious exception to



this rule is the Cleash. They are feared by the Thriddle, and with good reason. A growing ex-patriot village can be found on the northern end of the city. Oddly enough, the village is referred to as Shen-Sor or “The Shen”. The term was brought to Tan-Sor by Thriddle visitors returning home from Ardoth. The administration of most basic services for visitors and foreign scholars residing in Shen-Sor are similar to those offered by Shen Services in Ardoth.

WHERE TO STAY

There are adequate accommodations available in Tan-Sor for a reasonable price, though the obvious choice here is to seek out lodgings in Shen-Sor. Shen-Sor occupies an area roughly ten square blocks in size. The main thoroughfare through Shen-Sor is the Gomo Road, referred to simply as “The Gomo”. The Gomo Road is flanked on either side by Ceridiin Street to the south and Port Run Street to the north. I can confidently recommend the following lodging establishments:

The Gomo Mug: Bhan-Ho-Trid is both proprietor and shast of this inclep. Bhan-Ho-Trid is an interesting fellow, having spent much of his younger years traveling Burdoth, Heridoth, The Trinnus and Anasan. There is seating for 20 human sized patrons. A side set of rooms with moveable partitions can quickly be converted to welcome up to four Boccord or Bronth sized guests. Private single bed and semi-private double bed sleeping rooms are available for 40 and 20 yule a night, respectively. Bed and board arrangements can be made with Bhan-Ho-Trid and his staff for a reasonable fee. The rooms and linens are made up daily. The menu is plain and rather nondescript. Thombo and Tarro stews, durlig and occasionally potatoes are offered. Water, Rusper and Squam are available at the bar.

Wug Wug’s: A Woffen shenter on Tan-Iricid. A large common room provides

seating for two dozen. Six private “dens” are available for 45 yule a night. Common room floor space is available for 5 yule at night. Pay at the bar. The shast of this shenter is Wother Hraruh. Scolian Rusper, Wholl, Wug ‘n Wooc, Pibber and the occasional cat are available at the bar. The establishment is known (somewhat infamously) for its wild parties.

Atterol Hostelry: A new hostel for the Iscin Klade. Non-Klade members may take up lodging here on a space available basis. The Hostelry offers comfortable accommodations for up to 30 people. The Atterol Klade Fathers have recently negotiated the establishment of the hostel as part of a larger scholar exchange program. The rooms are comfortable and clean. Guests are treated to a complimentary breakfast. If space is available, rooms can be rented for 25 yule a night. Rooms will only be rented on a night-by-night basis to non-klade members.

Note: While Querrids can be seen just about everywhere in Tan-Sor, they are viewed as a distraction by klade members and are forbidden to ply their trade at the Hostelry. Sleep in peace.

WHERE TO SHOP

Part of what makes travel so special for me is seeing people going about their everyday lives. There is no better place for this than the Tan-Sor Bazaar. The Tan-Sor Bazaar was not started by the Thriddle, but by the Thivin. A group of Thivin craftsmen were invited to Tan-Sor more than 25 years ago to assist the Thriddle in the manufacture of high quality optic lenses. The Thivin population of Tan-Sor exploded overnight, causing quite a stir with the Thriddle. The Thivin are now viewed as part of the Tan-Sor community as well as a commercial necessity for the well being of the Bazaar.

The Bazaar consists of nothing more than a large flag stone paved plaza. A literal



'ritual of commerce' relives itself each day beginning at 4AM. Thombo carts carrying wooden stands and cloth awnings are carted into the plaza where they are quickly assembled by a small but dedicated group of Thivin and Thriddle merchants. Corastin movers assist with heavy lifting. The parade of thombo carts quickly leaves from the west end of the Bazaar. A second throng of carts enters the plaza from the east, carrying goods from nearby warehouses that are to be offered for sale that day. The still morning air is perfumed with the heavy smell of the cooking fires in the Bazaar. Thivin food preparers get an early start preparing the meals that will be served to the eager shoppers in the Bazaar. The Thivin from different booths call out greetings to one another and wish each other good luck in trading that day.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a couple of observations about food in the Bazaar. Thivin do not eat the food they prepare. Thriddle are extremely curious and can be served the same meal day after day if it is made to look or smell different somehow. There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that somewhere in Tan-Sor, some Thivin has written a cookbook on 1001 ways to prepare and cook coditch. There is one place in the Bazaar that I am quite fond of, and it is worth mentioning. There is a Thivin who flies a green and blue flag over his shop that serves "Tchrews". Tchrews or 'Thriddle Chews' are hot dumplings that are served on small polished wooden plates. His stand is surrounded by a half dozen small tables and chairs. You simply walk up, sit down and ask for Tchrews. You get four of these little dumplings in an order of Tchrews. The Tchrews are stuffed with... something ...vegetable...I think?? Human dinners are offered a small cup of hile tea with the Tchrews. Once you pop the first one in your mouth, you just can't stop. They are that

good! The plates are stacked on the table and when you are done eating, the number of plates is tallied to come up with your bill. One yule buys a plate of Tchrews, a cup of tea and a spectacular view of the Bazaar foot traffic. I always ask the old Thivin for the recipe. He always smiles at me and says, "I will tell you tomorrow". We both laugh and wish each other good day. I highly recommend Tchrews.

Querids. They are EVERYWHERE, including the Bazaar. Enough said.

As I mentioned earlier, Thivin craftsmen provide a significant quantity of the goods and services that are available in the Bazaar. High quality optics found in the Bazaar are, without exception, some of the best on Jorune. Binoculars, microscopes and telescopes of extraordinary quality can be purchased for a fair price. Reticules and conversion kits for many non-human races can also be purchased or commissioned in the Bazaar.

Many of the goods that you commonly expect to see for sale in a Bazaar are simply non-existent in the Tan-Sor Bazaar. Weapons and armor are simply not available here. Riding beasts of all types are available in very limited quantities in Tan-Sor. Animals can be purchased in the Bazaar, but the transactions are usually closed in the stocks situated just south of the docks.

Trinnu jungle goods including gigit are available here, but the prices are one step short of astronomical. What is available in abundant supply in the Bazaar are books and scholarly supplies. Textbooks on practically any subject, written in a variety of languages are offered for sale in the Bazaar. I personally have had good luck here finding texts on everything from geographic surveys and maps to folk tales. High quality paper products, writing instruments and a large variety of inks are all readily available here. The highly prized blue Loosh inks can be found here. Some small Earth-Tec items can



be found here in Tan-Sor, but such items are seldom seen in the Bazaar and are very, very expensive. There is one exception: Many Thriddle returning from Burdoth bring mementos of their travels home with them. Several species of old earth plants are slowly making their way into the Bazaar. Potatoes, Sunflowers, Marigolds and Petunias can be occasionally found in the Bazaar.

Thriddle children's toys, famous throughout Jorune, are available. The number and types of toys offered for sale boggles the mind. High quality Thriddle furniture is exported to many realms and is readily found in the shops surrounding the Bazaar.

TAN-IRICID: MOUNTAIN CROWN

Up until this point, I've spoken primarily about how to get to the mountain realm of Tan-Iricid, where you might stay and what you might do to pass a few idle hours after arriving in the port city of Tan-Sor. The vast majority of visitors who undertake the long and arduous journey to Tan-Iricid do so for one reason: They come to visit the Mountain Crown. The Mountain Crown is more than 2 days journey west of Tan-Sor. The road west out of Tan-Sor is good and you can generally expect to make good time. There is very little in the way of hostile wildlife in the northern part of Tan-Iricid, aside from the ever-present scragger. If you are traveling alone, there is no need to worry. The flux of visitors going to and returning from the Mountain Crown lends to a fairly consistent volume of travel on the western road. It is a simple matter to tag along with another party as they head west. At the end of the first day, if you've made good time, you should see a large broad stone walkway. This is the "Rilij". It appears to be the remains of an ancient road. It has been patched and repaired over time, however, some of the original stone work and

foundation stones can be glimpsed in places. Also located here alongside the Rilij is a small town- more of a village, really. The place is called Rili-Sor, after the roadway. Entrepreneurial Thriddle offer lodging and last minute sundries to travelers before they proceed on to the Mountain Crown. There is something unsavory about the staff of the inlepe here that I was never able to put my finger on. Several small roads from surrounding farmland join onto the Rilij at this point. Thombo cart caravans of food and other supplies destined for the Mountain Crown add to the westward traffic.

By the end of the second day, you will see the Mountain Crown. The Mountain Crown's silhouette against the setting sun is something to see. The sheer size of the place is simply beyond words. Caravans and visitors are received at the Mountain Crown around the clock. The Rilij ascends several hundred feet into the air to connect with a large open plaza. Steep cyclopean steps lead from this plaza up to the base of a series of pyramid like buildings. These buildings are, in fact, very similar to the Thooh'sa in Burdoth's Sydra province. High overhead, open doors or windows appear to have been cut into the living mountain. A personal observation that I would like to make is the base buildings of the Mountain Crown rest within what appears to be a large quarried space that was dug out of the red granite mountain millennia ago. There is no sign in the immediate area of the Mountain Crown of the stone that was quarried here. Equally mystifying is the fact that the base buildings are built of a lighter colored stone that I have seen nowhere else on the island of Tan-Iricid. I have learned through my studies here that the Mountain Crown was in fact a Lamorri stronghold long, long ago. The chamber and vaults of the Mountain Crown extend from the very top of the mountain down to a depth that is somewhat of a Thriddle secret. The lower levels of the



Mountain Crown are off limits to visitors. I am told that lower levels contain a significant collection of artifacts that the Thriddle believe to be too dangerous for public display. Some of these collections can be made available for private (supervised) study with the appropriate academic credentials. Speak with the library proctors for details. Most of these collections will unfortunately remain out of the public eye.

THRIDDLE

They are the vast majority of the scholars present at the Mountain Crown. Learning the Triddis language will greatly enhance your visit to the Mountain Crown. You quickly come to learn several things about the Thriddle that are not readily apparent when encountering Thriddle in cities or on lerrin, whether it be here on Tan-Iricid or abroad, as is the case with the large Thriddle population of Cosahmi in Burdoth. The Thriddle can be absolutely single-minded to the point of obsession. Their organizational skills are absolutely amazing. The logistics of running and maintaining a complex like the Mountain Crown are simply staggering. Add to this, their active efforts to add to their collections of artifacts and books, inventory and audit of existing collections, transcription efforts to copy age worn manuscripts for posterity, translation efforts of texts from original languages to others and you start to get a feel for the breadth and scope of their abilities. The Thriddle also engage in no small amount of scientific endeavors as well. Whether it be the advancement of applied mathematics for a better understanding of isho geometry and warp mapping or the implementation of a new coditch powered methane production process that is used to power gas lights, the Thriddle are definitely, without a doubt some of the most talented scientists on Jorune.

The thing that often baffles visitors to Tan-Iricid is the lack of any apparent leadership. There are no elected officials per se. There is no Chell of Tan-Sor or equivalent. Things just get done. If you visit the port in Tan-Sor for instance, you will see Thriddle customs officials inspecting shipping manifests, pro forma invoices and other documents, levying tolls and excise, etc. Documents are filed with the port authority. Who does the port authority answer to? The answer is no one that I've seen. Things just get done. There is a reason for this that I will get to in just a moment. There doesn't appear to be any form of centralized leadership. The same is true at the Mountain Crown. Everyone has a purpose. Everyone does the job that they are assigned to do. There are supervisors in some instances that mentor and ensure that tasks are completed. I have not seen that those in supervisory roles really answer to anyone. After speaking with several Thriddle colleagues and associates, the best understanding I have of the situation is as follows:

Thriddle parents essentially volunteer their offspring to perform duties in society. If any vacancies exist for such a position, the youngster is accepted. If there is no opening the family continues their search until a vacancy is found. For example, a Thriddle family might volunteer one or more of their children to work as an antique appraiser, or a mathematician or a craftsman or a civic official. The youngster dutifully shows up and is assigned a mentor supervisor who trains the young Thriddle in all there is to learn about that role within their society. This then becomes the Thriddle's profession. This process of placement begins when the young Thriddle is no more than 10 years old. A period of up to one year is considered customary to find a suitable mentor for the young Thriddle.



The system is not unlike the Klade system found in Burdoth, Jasp and elsewhere except that the Thriddle system extends to all roles in society, including government. There is a small circle of policy makers in Thriddle society. They arbitrate, settle disputes and provide strategic direction for Thriddle industry, exploration, diplomatic efforts, scientific endeavors, etc. Those Thriddle reside at and manage the Mountain Crown and if my colleagues are to be believed, their positions are filled the same way as any other role in society. There are of course those Thriddle who buck the system and decide that the profession chosen for them by their parents is not the best path for their life, but such instances are extremely rare.

Back to the Mountain Crown... where was I? Oh, yes. Learn Triddis. If you don't speak Triddis and don't have the inclination or the ability to pick up an extra language, hire a Fadri to assist you with your research. The library complex of the Mountain Crown contains a near exhaustive source of research material on just about any subject imaginable. You will need a giddyne to access the Mountain Crown library complex. They can be purchased at the Mountain Crown for a fee of 15 gemlinks. The giddyne has no expiration date and is inscribed with some trivial fact. The fee is used for general upkeep of the Mountain Crown and to sponsor Thriddle scholarly endeavors across Jorune. Keep your giddyne with you for the duration of your visit to the Mountain Crown.

You are now ready to sit and read in the great library of the Thriddle. There is one problem. Much of the vast wealth of knowledge stored here is available only in Triddis. More popular scholarly papers have been translated into many languages for ease of study. The cataloging of this vast collection is more than a little arcane. I spent a year at the Mountain Crown and never

really managed the system. I did indeed require assistance from proctors on more than one occasion.

There is a section of this catalog that is in Entren. If you rely only on the Entren portion of the catalog, you will be viewing materials that the Thriddle have decided are of interest to an Entren readership. There are, of course, translated contributions that have been donated by scholars but these are few and far between. Learning Triddis allows a researcher to pursue a line of inquiry through this vast storehouse of learning.

This brings to mind a cultural observation that I would like to point out. It is a well known fact that Thriddle will only sit when they feel "at ease". This is due in no small part to the fact that Thriddle have some difficulty rising to their feet from a sitting position. When you study at the Mountain Crown and the same Thriddle see you day after day, they unconsciously accept you as part of their surroundings after a time. They become comfortable with you in their presence and you will notice Thriddle scholars sitting at low tables working diligently on one project or another. As time passes, Thriddle become so comfortable with you that they simply take your presence for granted. This is where problems begin. You see, Thriddle have no sense of what Humans, Maudra, Boccord and the Iscin races refer to as "personal space". Thriddle begin to intrude into this "arm's reach" area around you. Things begin to quickly go down hill from there. It starts with a Thriddle sitting rather close to you... and the next thing you know, you turn your head and you bump your face into a tristy. Your mood begins to sour, annoyance and frustration begin to build. If you study at the Mountain Crown or live in close quarters with Thriddle for any period of time, I highly suggest finding a high impact physical hobby to work off your frustrations.



Thriddle that have spent extended periods of time with humans and others come to have some sense of personal space, but really never fully grasp the concept. Don't let this put a damper on your visit to the Mountain Crown.

During my stay at the Mountain Crown I was able to accomplish the research that my Klade Fathers had directed me to undertake. I also had the chance to perform a significant amount of independent research to satisfy my own curiosity. During the course of my reading, I stumbled across certain items that seemed somewhat odd. I was able to receive a great deal of assistance from a proctor who in all honesty was probably more interested in providing the materials I requested simply to be rid of me than from any desire to be helpful. I will share small tidbits of information that I learned in the hopes that our readers will one day visit the Mountain Crown to pursue similar research of their own.

I was intrigued by the very design of the Mountain Crown and wanted to learn more about the Lamorri. During the course of my studies, I learned a closely kept secret about the Thriddle. Many scholars hold to the idea that the Thriddle arrived on Jorune with the Lamorri. This is in fact NOT the case. The Thriddle are, in fact, indigenous to Jorune, originating in a land far to the west of Delsha across the ocean. The Lamorri did not recognize the Thriddle as an intelligent form of life and used them as a food source. When the Lamorri realized that the Thriddle were in fact highly intelligent, they were

enslaved and put to work as servants of the Lamorri.

I noticed that any travel undertaken by the Thriddle for the official business of Tan-Iricid is accompanied by a trip report. These reports consist of nothing more than the personal observations of things encountered by the trip participants as well as the usual records of monetary expenditures made during the course of their travels. These reports are filed and are entered into the official bureaucratic record. These records are all available for public viewing. Out of idle curiosity, I decided to see just how far back these records went and was amazed to discover that these records go back to the earliest days of the Thriddle inhabitation of Tan-Iricid. A flash of inspiration struck me! I scoured the records from the first century B.C. (Before Colonization) and stumbled upon the Thriddle's first contact with humanity on Jorune!! Many Iscin and other Burdothian Dharsage scholars have overlooked an obvious source of colony lore right under their very noses! There are several reports in the collection that detail the locations of human settlements and industry during the colony period!!

On that note, I will leave the reader to ponder what mysteries remain to be uncovered in the vast treasure trove of knowledge that is The Mountain Crown. I will also leave you with one last piece of advice. Never, EVER let a Thriddle give you a hair cut!

*Until next time, this is your Iscin at Large,
Dharwin Tanketta, wishing you safe and
pleasant travels.*





SUPERSTITIONS OF JORUNE

BY: WINSTON HUMBERT III, EDITOR DT

When I was a child going to Dharween's Preparatory School in Ardoth, we used to throw a piece of pibber over our shoulders to keep the old Woffen "Witch Lady" from giving us the evil eye as we walked past her shenter. Now and then I chuckle with the memory of how fast we ran by that building when we forgot our pibber strips; or worse yet, couldn't talk our parents into buying them for us. This was just one of many silly superstitions I learned in childhood. I was entranced by the power of them then, just as I am amused by the folly of them now.

Superstitions are all around us, if only you know where to look. Small gestures and hand signs, the wearing of certain colors, even poems and limericks to ward away bad luck are found in every culture across Jorune. During my travels I have made extensive notes on these little rituals, and share the most common for your enjoyment.

PLACES:

Ardoth

The uneducated in Ardoth oftentimes believe that a threatened thombo will cast a lightening blast dysha at its foe. Sadly, more than one have realized their mistake. Of late, the popularity of this school of thought is declining. Perhaps it is because of the high mortality rate of those who would perpetuate it. Also in Ardoth, a scragger bite is supposed to increase your life by four years. If this were true, my oldest guide will live to be about 250.

Heridoth

In Heridoth, dropping a gemule is considered bad luck, and the bumbling

offender can only remove the curse by circling his head with two fingers counter-clockwise. If this gesture isn't performed, it is widely believed that bad luck will befall you for four years. In same same way, when at an illidge in Heridoth, you may find that a patron loudly announces he is putting a yule on the table. Be quick to produce your own single yule piece, or you'll wind up buying the next round for the whole house.

East Trinnu Jungle Lands

In the East Trinnu Jungle Lands, the Jers have some superstitions all their own. No Jer will tolerate the company of a Thriddle on a jungle run. It is believed the presence of the giggit in such dangerous surroundings will bring out a lasting Thriddle Madness. Although I cannot comment on the frequency of Thriddle Maddness in the jungles, I have been around enough Thriddle to know that one suffering from such a malady would hardly make it out alive, and could endanger the entire party with his incessant rambling. Limilate Jers will often carry along a lucky preserved beagre foot to increase their chances for finding medicinal plants in the wilds. Some Jer believe that wearing or displaying a piece of dead tarro will ward off tarro attacks. I have yet to be present when this has worked. Not only does the tarro begin to smell in a few hours; but it seems to enrage the little vermin to new heights in their cacophony of screeching.

Thanitier

In Thanitier it is widely believed that the Cleash are masters of disguise. Any stranger could be a spy for the vile insects. This superstition has been taken so seriously by the government, that it has- in fact- damaged



trade and relations with other realms, forcing them into a self-imposed exile.

Anasan

In Anasan it is considered a great compliment to the chef to throw the dregs of your hilc tea onto the floor of the inclep. Any Anasan chef wouldn't dare tempt fate by trying to clean it up. This is why all incleps in Anasan have dirt floors. The best ones have an inch or two of greenish dust all over the floor. Wear your boots and leave room for seconds. The dust also acts as free advertisement when the patrons walk out into the streets, leaving a trail of it behind them. Follow the green stained streets to some of the best eats in the realm.

North Khodre

Old wives of most races insist on sleeping with some arrgish in a sachet under their pillow to ward off the healer and speed childbirth. This tradition originally started in North Khodre, where the largest sachet manufacturing still takes place.

Ros Crendor

The burly Boccord of Ros Crendor wouldn't dare awaken a Woffen. It is said the Woffen will put a curse on them, and it is better to let sleeping Woffen lie. For this reason, it is not uncommon to see a down-on-his-luck Woffen sleeping openly in the streets, incleps or anywhere else he chooses. Even the yords ignore them.

Tan-Iricid

Young non-Thriddle women in the Mountain Crown believe that touching a Thriddle's trid-node will make them more fertile. The highly annoyed, sore-noded Thriddle are ardently trying to quash this rumor.

Jasp

In Jasp twice-crossing money with someone in the same day is considered terrible luck. If you go into a Jaspian shop and don't buy everything you need, or sell everything you need to in one fell swoop,

they will refuse to wait on you again until the next day.

Sillipus

In Sillipus it is considered bad luck to free a slave. Slave owners feel that if they free a slave, somehow the newly emancipated will have a hand in their downfall. It could be something as insignificant as doing business with a rival shopkeeper.

RACES:

Thivin

Little Thivin children play a game hopping on one foot to and from the markets with their parents singing, "Step on a crack, break the klade's back. Step just fine, all the wealth is mine." Thivin parents still strongly believe in the old superstition that they cannot be seen eating. This is widely perpetuated today by Thivin all over Jorune. When is the last time *you* saw a Thivin eat?

Thriddle

The Thriddle are waiting for the second coming of the 'Ancient Masters'. These Masters are vilified in their ancient history and have spurred the Thriddle into weapons development. As we speak, they secretly watch the stars, fully intending to strike first at the menacing Masters. Stories of the 'Masters' are used to frighten little Thriddle children. When asked if the Thriddle had another name – a more recognizable name – for this great menace, even the learned brazier of the Mountain Crown herself, Sha-Hotra-Trid said, "I dare not speak it".

Iscin Scientists

Even the most learned souls on Jorune have their own superstitions. Some Iscin scientists believe that not all of Jorune is on our present maps. They believe there are undiscovered continents beyond Delsha. They theorize in hushed tones that Jorune has a 'dark side', where it is possible that some of the early colonists may have survived, and even thrived beyond the reach of the Shantha. This is hotly debated in the scientific community, and those Iscin who



openly endorse this theory are often shunned from the klades. The last Isclin attempting to sail west of Delsha to prove his point -over 50 years ago- has never returned.

Maudra

Adolescent Maudra of Sillipus must complete a rite of passage by traversing an obstacle course made up entirely of tumbernaugh vines. This is believed to toughen the young Maudra into an adult. Most Maudra would never raise a hand to harm a Shantha. It is believed they would lose their ability to weave if they harmed one of the Isho masters.

Woffen

Woffen have a strange ritual of offering their employer a freshly killed pibber once a week. If pibber isn't available, substitutions are often made. As I understand it, the offering is intended to show respect and deference. If you are offered a pibber, do not refuse the gift, as you could be in for years of bad luck. Most Woffen when making camp in the wilds will insist on 'christening' a circle of brush around the campsite to ward off evil spirits. Grooming a Woffen and clearing his fur of parasites is supposed to be good luck by humans. In larger cities, many entrepreneurial Woffen will charge the superstitious a yule for the privilege.

Crugar

Among the Crugar in Temauntro it is considered bad luck to marry your mate without first having a rousing row. Oftentimes, a misunderstanding is provided by the groom's family to stimulate such an argument when they approve of the match. Many Crugar are afraid of the water. Although they can swim, they will often go for miles around the nearest body of water rather than take a dip, or chance a boat crossing.

Tologra

The Tologra consider it bad luck for the male to support the family. In Tologrian society, the females must not only earn a living but care for the young as well. This superstition has led to the modern day widespread practice of polygamy.

Salu

If you ever meet a Salu in your travels, don't expect to shake his hand. Salu are terrified that if they touch a land-dweller, they will lose their ability to breathe underwater and be 'cursed' to live on land with the rest of us.

Bronth

Bronth females often exile their husbands from the house after they have children. It is believed that having a man in a house with little ones brings sickness and death. Although these views are changing, enclaps catering to young, ousted fathers remain quite busy in the spring.

Ramian

Although little is known of the Ramian, I have heard tell that a poor quality mate can force a male into cheveer. As I understand it, divorce is not tolerated among their people, but joining the Gyre is.

Corastin

Corastin are huge, hulking individuals capable of crushing a thombo skull with one hand. Despite their tough exteriors, Corastin are deathly afraid of beagre. Although some can learn to tolerate their presence in the markets, most will simply turn on a yule and walk (if not run) away.

As you can see, many of the races and places on Jorune have their own special quirks and identities. Perhaps the next time you're in Heridoth and someone calls out "Yule!" you'll know exactly what to do.

Until next time, I'm Winston Humbert III, hoping to find you in my Danstead Travels.





DHARWIN'S POKE IT WITH A STICK!

BY: DHARWIN TANKETTA, ISCIN CORRESPONDENT, *DT*

Hello there! I'm Dharwin Tanketta. I'm a klade-trained field Iscin. As a field Iscin, I often have the opportunity for wilderness travel. I want to take this opportunity to share some of my observations on wildlife that you may encounter during the course of your travels.

I chose the name of column for a very specific reason. If you find yourself traveling in unfamiliar territory and you stumble across something that you haven't seen before, always exercise extreme caution. You may feel a little silly afterwards in some instances, but an ounce of caution is well worth ending the day with all your limbs still attached.

I recently completed a trip to Tan-Iricid and decided it might be worth talking a bit about some of the plants and animals you may encounter if you wander up the beach and away from the breakwater at the Port of Tan-Sor.

VOOLIJ

The Voolij is a large hard-shelled omnivorous crustacean that can be found along rocky beaches of the Ceridis Sea. The shell of the Voolij can measure up to four feet across. Specimens can weigh upwards of 300 pounds. The creature is virtually defenseless on land, relying on its rock like shell for natural camouflage on beaches and in tidal basins.

The Voolij will feed on fish, mollusks and just about anything else that it finds trapped in tidal pools. The slow moving Voolij also scours the beach, feeding on heglis bulbs and strands washed up on

shore by the tide. When food becomes scarce, the Voolij enters the surf and travels out to the heglis beds where it uproots the plant from the sea floor. The tides carry the heglis to shore where it is consumed by the Voolij. The Voolij carries four large egg sacks on its underside that contain thousands of eggs. When the time and tides are right, these egg sacks burst, scattering the Voolij eggs among the rocks on the seashore. The young Voolij hatch and crawl into the surf where they remain until they reach adulthood. The Salu greatly prize the eggs of the Voolij. If you are lucky, you may see Salu emerge from the surf and overturn the Voolij for this delicacy.

HEGLIS BULBS AND STRANDS

Heglis is an aquatic plant that grows on the sea floor. As the plant matures, it develops a single large air filled bulb that carries the upper portion of the plant towards the surface where sunlight is more plentiful. Heglis is often uprooted by the Voolij or storm action and can be found on many beaches along the Sea of Ceridis. The meaty heglis bulb is popular with the Thriddle. Humans can consume heglis with a sufficient quantity of hile. It's has a taste and texture that is somewhat like squishy cucumbers.

DAERIIL FLYERS

A distant sea faring relative of the desert Crill, these small birds offer viewers an amazing display of aerial acrobatics. Daeriil Flyers are small with an average wingspan of less than two feet. The Daeriil Flyer



skims the wave tops, hunting for small fish. The Daeriil Flyer congregates only for mating, otherwise living a solitary existence. The bird lives alone in burrows that it digs into sandy cliff sides with its wickedly sharp claws. The Daeriil Flyer lays its eggs in this burrow. The chicks grow at an alarming rate, leaving the burrow seven to ten days after hatching.

JOORD

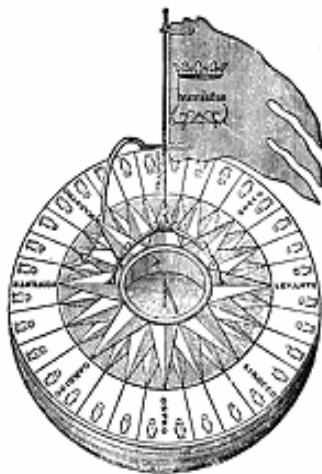
This spider like insect appears to be related to the Saka. The meaty body of this insect is a bit larger than fist sized and specimens can weigh upwards of two pounds. The yellow and orange stripes of the Joord allow it to blend into the grasses that cover the dunes along the shores of Tan-Iricid. While not poisonous, the Joord can inflict a seriously painful bite if molested. (Poke it with a stick!) The Joord will often make its home in the burrows of the Daeriil Flyer. Daeriil Flyer chicks are a tasty treat for the Joord. The Joord will quickly seal the entrance with a thick mucous plug that dries in minutes to a rock like hardness. The Joord leaves only a small hole in the center of the

plug for the exchange of air. Joord plugs are often collected by beachcombers for use as fish trap weights.

CHEDRIS BUSH

This low growing joruni shrub can be found covering the tops of dunes. The waxy circular leaves are gathered by Thriddle learsis for use as a medicinal tea. The effects of Chedris tea on Thriddle is similar to that of the argish limilate on humans. Humans may consume Chedris with no ill effect, but do not enjoy any healing benefit other than a calm sense of well-being. The local Thriddle learsis tell me that Chedris is poisonous to the Cleash, attacking their central nervous system, causing blindness, paralysis, painful rectal itch and death within minutes.

Until next time, this is your Iscin at large, Dharwin Tanketta, wishing you safe and pleasant travels. Remember, if you see something and you don't know what it is... Follow my number one cardinal rule and **POKE IT WITH A STICK!**



Common Mariner's Compass



FOR SHOLARIS ONLY NEW CREATURES OF DRAIL

ESCARNAUGHTS

Escarnaughts are small (6-9 cm) tide pool dwelling crustaceans that frequently linger in the surf surrounding the western coasts of Drail. These creatures collect charged Desti crystals and affix them to the outside of their shells with an organic cement secreted from the joints between their spiny legs. The bodies are easily retracted into the shell, effectively sealing the animal inside the shell with a “door” of red crystal. The crystals provide the otherwise helpless escarnaught with more than adequate protection from most predators. When threatened, they activate one of the red crystals on their shell, effectively launching a lightening blast dysha at the intruder. Thank goodness it has bad aim.

Escarnaught	Number Appearing: D20
Type	Herbivore
Reaction	Apathetic
Skin Armor	Thailiarian on shell
Advantage bonus	+0
Attacks, Type	Lightening blast dysha
Damage for each	Normal
Speed	1D10 in water, 1D4 on land
Attack Rank	4
Defense Rank	10
Defense Size	-10
To hit at range	-12
Isho	1D4
Special	1D6 tiny red crystals on shell

KARIJ SLUG

A 30 centimeter sea slug that lives in tidal pools in western Drail. Relying on tra sense alone, these slimy creatures are the only known natural predator of the escarnaughts. Light tan in color, they rely mainly on camouflage with the sandy bottom to catch their quicker prey. They quickly drain the isho from the escarnaught with special pseudopods that are inserted into the shell of the crustacean. The isholess escarnaught is left helpless. Once drained of isho, the slug crams the entire escarnaught in its mouth. The shell is held there for a few moments while the isho is drained from each of the crystals. Once drained, the slug spits out the shell and settles back in to catch another unwary escarnaught. The victimized escarnaught is then left to recharge his crystals via underwater isho

Karij Slug	Number Appearing: D6
Type	Carnivore – Isho feeder
Reaction	Apathetic
Skin Armor	0
Advantage bonus	+0
Attacks, Type	Isho Drain
Damage for each	1D4
Speed	1D6 in water
Attack Rank	6
Defense Rank	4
Defense Size	-8
To hit at range	-8
Isho	1D10
Special	Only feeds on escarnaught



vents, or to discard his empty home, and begin again with a new shell. The slime of the karij slug is used by locals to treat burns.

DRAIL JUNGLE CAT

The Drail Jungle Cat is a large, nocturnal pack hunter occurring on mainland Drail and some of the surrounding islands. Reaching 8-10 feet in length and weighing in between 800-1000 pounds, the cat has wide flat head with 4 fleshy-socketed eyes, typical of many species of Joruni life. The Drail Jungle Cat sees its world with excellent tra-sense and has the ability to mask its signature effectively disappearing into the surrounding isho. The Drail Jungle Cat often seeks out caves and has also been known to dig burrows. The DJC emerges from its lair only during darkness. A pride of DJC work in teams

Drail Jungle Cat	Number Appearing: D6
Type	Carnivore
Reaction	Manic
Skin Armor	Leather -2
Advantage bonus	+3
Attacks, Type	2 claws 1 bite
Damage for each	Knife +2
Speed	4D6+5
Attack Rank	12
Defense Rank	9
Defense Size	+3
To hit at range	Body -4, legs -6, head -8
Isho	5D6
Special	Signature masking abilities at Seasoned

to bring down prey. An entire pride may work together to bring down large game like mandare or corondon. DJC are voracious eaters, quickly depleting prey animals in a hunting area before moving on to new territory. Claws and teeth of the DJC are a preferred trade good with the Trarch, as is the pelt. The pelt is likewise prized by Thantierian colonists throughout northern Drail. The pelts are a rusty orange color with 3-5 inch fur with a crest from the head tapering off at the hindquarters. In the right light, the pelts seem iridescent and can cast a greenish or turquoise sheen. Large pelts can fetch upwards of 2 gemclusters on the open market. The exorbitant price reflects the extraordinary danger undertaken to harvest the pelt of this ferocious predator. Claws are 5-7", teeth are 2-3". The Trarch refer to these creatures as the "Smiling Death".

Special attack: If they're hunting in packs: One will charge the target (roll of 1-4 on D6) attempting to knock him off his feet. If the attack is successful, the rest of the pack charges in to finish off the victim.



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WINSTON GOES TO DELSHA TO GET HIS REVENGE

DHARWIN GOES TRIBAL: TRAVELING IN THE EASTERN DOBEN-AL